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WORLD-POLITICS.

ST. PETERSBURG: WASHINGTON.

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TRUTH is stranger than fiction in contemporary Russian history, where wonders are daily wrought by revolutionaries even when they are only mischievous scholars playing truant. Feats that might well seem impossible to intrepid soldiers are achieved with ease by beardless boys. A few days ago fifteen striplings held up a train on the South Western Railway and carried out an elaborate plan with the thoroughness of a Japanese army corps. Nowadays trains are accompanied and protected by special armed guards, but these enterprising lads bound the guards, the watchmen, the engine-drivers, the conductors, the comptrollers, and then terrorized hundreds of passengers and set to work. Unable to force open the safe, they blew up the luggage-van with dynamite, setting fire to it; they then robbed the mail-wagon, detached the engine from the train and departed on it, leaving the passengers helpless. All Russia marvelled at the push and energy of these youthful citizens. Equally characteristic was the exploit of a lad, a few days later, who, entering a second-class railway-carriage, pulled out his revolver and cried, "Hands up!" And all hands went up, except those of one passenger, who, unarmed as he was, rushed at the bandit, knocked him down and called upon his fellow travellers to help him. But the fellow travellers all sat still as if kept in position by some wizard's spell. Finally, the highwayman escaped, leaving his revolver behind, leaped from the train and made off in the darkness unscathed.

Youth which ought to be the hope of the nation is thus become the source of its fears. That is the burden of nearly all the plaintive utterances one hears on the decay of Russia. One of the most recent of these emanates from Count Tolstoy, the vener-

able sage of Yassnaya Polyana, whose literary jubilee of over half a century has been allowed to pass unnoticed. No, not wholly unnoticed: shots were fired at his house by some lads, who went unpunished. At the tea-table, next day, the Count said:

"Youth no longer shows respect to age. I recollect a venerable old peasant named Yermiloff, who dwelt here in Yassnaya Polyana. He had a large family, and whenever the members quarrelled he was their judge. He was wont to lock up his daughters-in-law in two different rooms of the ground floor when they fell out. And such was the authority he enjoyed that his decision was never questioned. Now it is quite different. The old folks tell me that the young people refuse to acknowledge their authority.

"The other evening I was coming home from a walk in the park when the voices of children reached me from behind the trees. They were reviling each other in the coarsest and most obscene words. My first impulse was to pass on. Then it occurred to me that one of my own pupils might be among them. How could I walk on if that were possible! Well, I drew near to the group of children, and sure enough there was one of my former pupils, a pretty boy of twelve. But his glance was no longer pure, his eyes no longer those of a child. . . . I spoke to him. Was he not ashamed, I asked, to have uttered such coarse words? 'It wasn't me,' he answered, telling a lie. I pointed out to him that he, being the eldest among these children, was spoiling and ruining them. 'Ho! ho!' exclaimed the little boy provokingly and without winking. 'You should hear how they swear! Much worse than I.' Such an impression as this is unspeakably painful. The picture which it conjures up in my mind's eye is that of an upturned glass. Pour out as much water as you will, it will flow down the sides. Not a drop can enter the glass. Truly, it is terrible."

The press is largely responsible for this demoralization of Russia's youth. It exhorted the students and scholars to quit the lecture-halls for subterranean meetings of revolutionary societies, it helped to turn the temples of science into debating-rooms and bomb factories and it gave its readers falsehood as daily nourishment and truth only as medicine. And as for Russian parents, the least bitter thing one can say with truth is that they are even more difficult to educate than their children.

"One of the characteristic traits of our liberation movement," writes the chief Russian paper, "and of the press that illustrates it, is unfortunately glaring, shameless falsehood. This weapon is, so to say, hallowed by tradition. . . . Untruth is everywhere; like a cobweb it covers Russian life in all its aspects, veils its eyes, hinders it from seeing, dulls its hearing. Meanwhile the human

spiders diligently spin their web, zealously invent lies, eagerly deceive and dissemble, yet drape themselves in the toga of integrity which becomes them as a saddle might become a cow."

It is not merely that political fanatics, who think that the end justifies the means, deliberately give currency to an untruth. But lies are the very staff of life, as it were. Circumstantial stories of every conceivable kind are therefore invented and given to the world. A short time ago, one of the most widely read journals in St. Petersburg, commenting upon the need of elegance in life, informed its readers that the walls of the Café Luitpold in Munich are decorated with splendid frescoes painted by Lenbach. As a matter of fact, Lenbach had neither time nor inclination to decorate *cafés*, and he never painted a fresco in his life.

That the press organ of the Russian League should accuse the Finnish people of hatching a plot to kill the Tsar by running his yacht on to a rock is not surprising. For the motive is manifest. But for that very reason the calumny is harmless. Few people now favor the odious theory put forward by the "*Russkoye Znamya*" to account for the accident to the Tsar's yacht. Everybody finds the explanation adequate which Russian negligence affords, and many monarchists fear that this ingrained predisposition to perfunctoriness will one day give the terrorists the opportunity which they are now eagerly seeking to slay the Tsar and strike his adherents with panic. Only a few days ago the central press organ of the revolutionary party frankly, nay, brutally, expressed the conviction that soon a real trial would take place of genuine regicides for the slaying of the Tsar. Unhappily, forewarned is not forearmed in Russia.

Miracles of thoughtlessness amuse or horrify the foreign observer of Russian life almost every day. But they are one and all of the type which was so admirably illustrated by an amazing incident that occurred in the early days of the reign of Alexander II. In May of the year 1857 the Grand Duke Nicholas was on board a steamer sailing down the river Volkhoff. As the captain, a Russian, did not inspire much confidence, an English captain, resident in St. Petersburg, was hurriedly sent for and installed on the bridge. It was a measure of precaution, nothing more. The Englishman, taking it for granted that things were what they seemed to be, bade the stokers do their work well. He could not assume that the furnaces and boilers were defective,

and he was consequently stupefied to learn that the flames were coming out through a long hole in the metal and that the ship was in danger of being burned to ashes. The captain gave orders that the fire should be extinguished. Buckets were accordingly fetched, filled with water, and then found to be useless, owing to great cracks through which the water leaked out. Undaunted, the British seaman ordered the men to lower the life-boat. His command was quickly obeyed, but it was inefficacious because the boat, being dried and warped, had large cracks and on reaching the water sank before his eyes. Disgusted, the captain had a hawser cast to the bank of the river, but as it had been long out of use it was rotten and snapped. Finally the Grand Duke, the captain and all the human beings on board forded the river without difficulty and then saw the ship burn to the water's edge.

But if the "Nichevo"* mood and implicit trust in St. Nicholas are the bane of the common people, formality and routine are the undoing of the upper classes. Use and wont give rise to a number of suppositions and stories which have no foundation in fact. Here is one sensational tale which lately grew out of the habit which soldiers and officers are obliged to cultivate of answering their superiors in the words, "It is exactly so" (*tochnotak*). During the manœuvres at Krassnoye Selo this summer, the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevitch was on the field following the evolutions of the troops. He is the personage whose life was twice attempted last winter and whose influence with the Emperor, which is sometimes decidedly beneficent, is nearly always considerable. The attacking body of soldiers having fired, the Grand Duke, who is no coward, suddenly rose up in his saddle, grew pale and moved aside to consult with a group of officers. Then a general rode over, and addressing the commander of the attacking troops, asked how it happened that one or more of the soldiers had used ball cartridges. The officer lost his head, stuttered, denied the allegation and fell silent. The general said: "But the bullet fell at His Imperial Highness's feet. Here [turning to some officers behind him], is not that so?" "It is exactly so, Your Excellency," was the reply. Exactly. They were accustomed to make this reply, and they made it. And it lent color to a story which was utterly groundless. The commanding

* "Nichevo" means, among many other things, "Never mind," "Don't worry." It is constantly in the mouths of Russians.

officer, having recovered his reasoning powers, began to explain that ball cartridges could not have been distributed, but the general rode away, leaving the story on record. The truth would seem to be that, so elaborate and numerous and effectual are the precautions taken, a mistake is practically impossible. Yet the legend is now believed that among the troops in camp a couple of months ago certain officers and men conspired to take the life of the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevitch and went the length of firing at him.

Political passions in Russia are gradually subsiding. Things and persons are beginning to be seen in correct perspective. The masses yearn for peace and are willing to pay heavily for it. They are no longer concerned whether the Duma snatches more prerogatives from the Tsar than he accorded in his Manifesto. In the elections, they take but little interest, most of the qualified voters keeping away from the polling-booths. The Government, willing to work with any Chamber, hopes great things from the third Duma, and is covering \$5,000 worth of paper with bills and proposals for its consideration. But perhaps the most characteristic of all these signs of the times are the "Home-comers." These are political convicts who, having escaped from the prisons, the strongholds and the penal colonies of Siberia, are voluntarily coming back. The phenomenon is unprecedented. The curious people of Siberia asked the returning convicts for an explanation. "The general stagnation of things political, and the difficulty of obtaining revolutionary employment," was the answer. "The miseries of an illegal life are easily borne," one of the home-comers added, "when they are outweighed by the consciousness that you are doing good work. But when you lack this set-off illegal life is unbearable."

WASHINGTON, *November, 1907.*

WHEN President Roosevelt heard of the failure of the Westinghouse corporation, he is said to have ejaculated naïvely, "Why, I never meant to hurt Westinghouse!" The company in question, as its receiver will easily be able to demonstrate, was and is solvent, but its notes, which were negotiable anywhere three months ago, could not be discounted at the time of the corporation's collapse, owing to the state of the money market. A great manufacturing company must, of course, meet with cash

many of its continually recurring obligations. The sphere of the Westinghouse Company's operations, moreover, had of late been extended greatly, though by no means beyond the compass of its resources had the normal conditions of credit prevailed. Unfortunately, the delicately poised structure of credit, which, as regards the ratio of its dimensions to currency has been compared to a pyramid standing on its apex, had been jostled rudely, with the result that legal tenders were unprocurable in quantities adequate to the needs of the American community. The spectacle which we have witnessed during the last few weeks has recalled that which was presented in the United States during 1837, not long after the beginning of Van Buren's administration. When President Jackson had withdrawn the Government deposits from the United States Bank, he had dealt a deadly blow to the resources and the credit, not only of that corporation, but of a multitude of dependent and affiliated concerns. The grave consequences of the act did not disclose themselves immediately, but the ultimate outcome was the destruction of public confidence, not only in bank-notes, but in every species of commercial paper. Enterprise was paralyzed; commerce halted; the myriad wheels of industry were stopped. It seemed scarcely worth while for farmers to sow seed beyond what would suffice to meet their personal wants, for there was no certainty that a surplus could be disposed of at a profit. No historian of the period has expressed a doubt that, had the panic of 1837 occurred a year earlier, not only Jackson's policies, but Jackson himself, had he come forward for a third term, would have been repudiated loudly and fiercely at the ballot-box. As it happened, Jackson's favorite lieutenant, Van Buren, was left to bear the brunt of the storm, with the result that he was beaten overwhelmingly when he came up for reelection in 1840. Unquestionably, Van Buren was a scapegoat for Jackson's sins. Mr. Roosevelt has been less fortunate than the hero of New Orleans. The Roosevelt panic has taken place a twelvemonth before the end of his second term. It is possible, of course, that the devastation threatened by the Roosevelt panic may be checked and circumscribed, thanks to the self-sacrificing efforts of some of the very financiers whom the President has striven persistently to injure in public esteem. We say *self-sacrificing*, for it is obvious that a banker who has at his disposal, or can procure easily, ten, twenty, thirty millions

of dollars in cash, could double or treble his capital by simply remaining passive, and allowing a panic to take its course, before making investments. To lend money at ten per cent. at such a critical conjuncture, when more than a hundred per cent. had been offered, is recognized throughout the land as an act of magnanimous beneficence.

Assuming, for the sake of argument, that the Roosevelt panic has been quelled, and that the President's popularity, though impaired by it, has not been extinguished, we are still confronted with the question, Could the present occupant of the White House obtain a third term, if, in spite of his repeated declarations, he should let himself be persuaded to accept another nomination? It is certain that the chatter about a third term for Mr. Roosevelt is gathering volume at Washington, and the assertion is now often made in quarters usually well informed that, under certain circumstances, he may be prevailed upon to run in 1908. Those who desire to see the President the next Republican nominee allege that there has been no wide-spread and vehement protest against the suggestion, and from this circumstance they deduce that silence has already given assent. They forget that the deep-rooted hostility of the American people to a third term has not yet been provoked to earnest expression, because few people have believed that, under any conceivable pressure, the President could be prevailed upon to forswear his proclaimed determination not to accept a renomination. They ought to take warning, however, from the fact that already Mr. Roosevelt has had his Burchard in the person of a professor in a Western college, who, with amazing fatuity, has declared at a public meeting that the national welfare demands that the present Chief Magistrate shall be elected a King for life. This, in spite of the fact that experience has shown that the life-tenure of executive power, whether the office bear the title of Princeps, Mayor of the Palace, Lord Protector, First Consul or Prince-President, is apt to be transformed into an hereditary sovereignty. Amusing as this incident is, it undesignedly foreshadows the storm of obloquy and derision to which Mr. Roosevelt would be subjected should he defy an unwritten law of the republic and try to accomplish that which Washington, Jefferson and Jackson refrained from essaying, and in trying to attain which even the Man of Appomattox succumbed.

The circumstances under which the anti-third-term tradition was established, and also the outcome of the crucial test which it bore in 1880, have of late been recounted lucidly and briefly in the twenty-third volume of Hart's American Nation Historical Series. The author of that volume, Professor Edwin E. Sparks, of the University of Chicago, recalls that a proposal made in the Philadelphia Convention of 1787 to limit the Presidential term to seven years, but to make a President ineligible for a second term, was rejected, and that, consequently, Washington, the first Chief Magistrate, was at liberty to serve as many terms as public desire and his own judgment might dictate. Yet, contemplating retirement even toward the close of his first term, he wrote to Madison that "the spirit of the Government may render a rotation in the elective offices of it more congenial with the ideas of liberty and safety." Having consented to accept a second term because of the "perplexed and critical posture of our affairs with foreign nations," he rejoiced four years later that the condition of the Republic no longer rendered "the pursuit of inclination incompatible with the sentiment of duty or propriety." Professor Sparks goes on to remind us that in 1807 President Jefferson directed attention to the danger lest, "if some termination to the services of the Chief Magistrate be not fixed by the Constitution, or supplied by practice, this office, nominally for years, will, in fact, become for life; and history shows how easily that degenerates into an inheritance." Jefferson's determination to avert this menace, and to observe the "sound precedent of an illustrious predecessor," was praised in the press and at public meetings: rotation in the Presidential office was declared to be the bulwark of freedom. Between Jefferson and Jackson no Chief Magistrate was sufficiently popular to put this principle of the "unwritten Constitution" to the test, and Jackson had advocated so persistently in his Messages to Congress the adoption of an amendment prohibiting even a second term, that he could not think of accepting a third without stultifying himself. Fortunate was it, as we have said, for Jackson's reputation that he did not accept a third term, for, within a few months after he left the White House, the appalling panic of 1837 broke out, and his favorite for the succession to himself, Van Buren, was defeated easily in 1840, when he ran for the second term, because he was looked upon as per-

sonifying Jackson's financial policy, which had come to be detested.

So firmly planted became the antagonism to Presidential self-succession, that the six elected Presidents who followed Jackson served but one term each or less, and Lincoln was the first in a quarter of a century to be chosen for a second term. For Grant, also, who, at the head of great armies, had won victory after victory, and who had received the principal share of credit for the restoration of the Union, a second term was secured, but the recognition of the vastness of his services could not prevent a revival of the old dread of a third term long before his second drew to a close. Soon after Grant's second election, the cry of "Cæsarism" was raised, and continued to be heard until "No Third Term" became a shibboleth, so that Grant's name was not even presented to the Republican Convention of 1876. When, however, early in 1880, Grant returned from a three years' tour of the world, he was greeted with an outburst of popular enthusiasm which some of his former lieutenants mistook for a desire to have him returned to the Presidential chair. It will be remembered that Conkling brought New York into line for a third term for Grant; that Logan did the same thing for Illinois, and Cameron for Pennsylvania. Several minor States followed in the wake of these great commonwealths. Moreover, many persons who in 1876 would have opposed giving Grant a third term, supported him in 1880, on the ground that the precedents ran only against a third consecutive term, and that the four years which had elapsed since Grant left office had removed his disability. In spite of the plausible, though essentially unsound, distinction thus drawn, the cries of alarm of four years before were reheard, and Cæsar, Cromwell and Napoleon were brought forward as examples of civic menace in a military hero. The result is well known. In the Republican National Convention of 1880, Grant never got more than 312 votes, while 379 were necessary for a choice. Then and there was it supposed to have been demonstrated that there is to be no third term for an American President, even if it be not consecutive.